



Supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

The MacArthur Foundation's Safety & Justice Challenge, active in 34 counties and four cities across the country, aims to develop and implement progressive criminal justice reforms to safely reduce jail and prison populations and address racial disparities. The National Center for Victims of Crime joined the Challenge as a strategic ally to ensure criminal justice reformers incorporate crime survivors' experiences by giving their voices equal consideration. The National Center held a series of roundtables, victim focus groups, and webinars in various locations around the country with victim service and criminal justice professionals.

After analyzing results from these events, it developed eight principles, grouped into four categories, that represent key methods and themes that the Challenge's Implementation and Innovation Sites must utilize for their reform efforts to adequately represent the needs of all involved in the justice system. The principles must be used collectively for reformers to understand how victims experience the criminal justice process and what front-end reforms are necessary for victims to feel respected and heard.

Systemic Issues

#1: Recognize and Enforce Victims' Rights

- The justice system should be dedicated, in part, to rebuilding an individual's life after victimization.
- While the federal government has passed legislation enacting victims' rights, and 32 states have amended their constitutions to include victims' rights, these rights and laws are not always recognized and enforced.
- Victims must be treated with fairness, dignity, and respect, which means affording them:
 - » Reasonable protection
 - » Notification of court proceedings
 - » Opportunities to confer with the government's attorney

#2: Recognize the Limits of Justice System Dichotomy

- Victim vs. perpetrator dichotomy is helpful mainly for adjudicatory purposes, but its utility is limited.
- It can create barriers to critical treatment and services for individuals coming in contact with the criminal justice system who may have experienced victimization.
- All such individuals' underlying trauma must be acknowledged.
- The need for trauma-informed rehabilitation must also be recognized as characteristic of both victims and perpetrators.

Services

#3: Provide Affordable, Effective, and High-Quality Services for Victims

- Crime survivors must be provided with affordable, effective, and high-quality offerings such as family justice centers and other culturally-aware victim services.
- Such services help victims feel safe and allow them to begin rebuilding their lives.
- These services can also help reduce long-term trauma resulting from victimization.

#4: Provide Affordable, Effective, and High-Quality Services for Perpetrators

- Alternatives to incarceration for perpetrators must be affordable, effective, and high-quality. If not, they could place victims in fear for their personal safety.
- Examples include drug and mental health courts; housing, job, and trauma counseling; and early intervention and batterer's intervention programs.
- Such well-implemented services for perpetrators may increase safety and quality of life for victims.

Safety

#5: Prioritize Victims' Safety

- When individuals are released from prison, the justice system must:
 - » Ensure they are protected
 - » Consult them about the type of protection they need
 - » Put mechanisms in place to provide those protections
 - » Communicate regularly and respectfully with victims
- Victims should be provided:
 - » Notice of release
 - » Civil or criminal protection orders
 - » Safe exchange and visitation protocols for children

#6: Adequately Supervise Perpetrators in Community Programs

- While we saw in Principle No. 4 a need for high-quality perpetrator services, perpetrators in such programs must be adequately supervised and held accountable if they are diverted to community-based programs.
- Lack of accountability in such programs causes victims to distrust and not want to engage with the justice system.
- It can also lead to fear and a sense of decreased safety among victims.

Special Issues

#7: Provide Accessible and Trauma-Informed Criminal Justice Professionals

- Procedural justice, which centers around criminal justice system transparency, ensures victims are treated with fairness and dignity.
- For example, government attorneys should receive trauma-informed training before communicating with victims. This way, when victims receive notice of and access to court hearings, attorneys will know how to best understand and respect the victim.
- Trauma-informed training will allow all justice professionals to understand how trauma may affect a victims' behavior. It will also foster trust and cooperation with victims.

#8: Pay Special Attention to Relational Cases

- Recognize that any case where a relationship exists between the parties requires special attention.
- Common examples include dependency cases (interpersonal or interfamilial), which will likely involve housing, finances, and/or caregiving issues.
- Interdisciplinary teams involving medical, social, workplace, and community actors should be employed in this regard.
- Pre-trial assessments must be utilized to recognize and address the unique circumstances of these relationships.

We Welcome Your Feedback

The National Center for Victims of Crime is open to feedback on how to improve these principles. If you feel that a principle is incomplete, please let us know. It is our goal to provide technical assistance to Implementation and Innovation Sites by ensuring crime survivors' voices are heard in discussions on criminal justice reforms.

Please contact us at:
The National Center for Victims of Crime
3118 Washington Blvd., Ste. 101207
Arlington, VA 22210

sjchallenge@victimsofcrime.org
www.victimsofcrime.org
(202) 467-8700

Get More Information

If you are a victim advocate or justice system professional, or if you are interested in criminal justice reform, we encourage you to use the resources below to learn more. The MacArthur Foundation website shows the locations of the Safety and Justice Challenge Implementation and Innovation Sites and has information on how to get involved.

MacArthur Foundation Safety & Justice Challenge
www.safetyandjusticechallenge.org

Vera Institute of Justice
www.vera.org/ending-mass-incarceration

Equal Justice Initiative
www.eji.org